5. Statement regarding the Food position in Cochin

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* Before we proceed to the items on the Agenda, Mr. President, Sir, with your leave, I wish to make a statement regarding the food position in Cochin.

Mr. President: Is it on anything of special urgency that you wish to make the statement?

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* Yes, Sir.

Mr. President: Yes, you may.

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* Mr. President, with your leave, let me place before the House for its information a few facts about our food situation today.

Cochin is a deficit area. Our monthly off-take of rice on a 12 oz. basis per adult is between 11 and 12 thousand tons per month. Last month the off-take was 11,566 tons. Of this about 75 per cent is met from allotments made by the Government of India from month to month. The balance is made up by local procurement.

This month of July has been a very bad month of scarcity in Cochin. Even in normal times, July is a month of scarcity in Cochin. This year on account of unforeseen events we had to face certain difficulties in the matter of food distribution.

Cochin was allotted a quantity of 7390 tons of rice for the month of July. This allotment supplemented by local stocks would have been sufficient to carry us safely to the month of August. And fresh allotments would be made for August.

The allotment for July of 7390 tons was to have reached Cochin in three steamers. One steamer 'Empire Rani' reached the port of Cochin on the 10th of July and delivered 2000 tons of rice towards the allotted quantity of 7390 tons. The balance of 5390 tons was to be delivered to us by two other steamers. Steamer 'Jaladutta' expected on the 22nd of July was to have discharged a 100 tons and steamer 'Shazada' expected by the end of July, the balance of 4390 tons.

Information reached us by the middle of July that 'Shazada' may not reach Cochin Port earlier than the 1st week of August. Therefore, on the 16th of July, while I was in New Delhi, I approached the Government of India and persuaded them to direct that the 'Jaladutta', expected here on the 22nd July may discharge 4000 tons instead of 1000 tons. I represented that if this not done our rationing system may break down. The Food Department at the New Delhi allowed my request.

Had this steamer 'Jaladutta' reached Cochin Port on the 22nd July or thereabouts, we could have managed to pull on. But the steamer did not reach Cochin on the 22nd July nor has it reached Cochin. The next steamer carrying our balance July quota as I said, may not reach earlier than August.

From the above statement of facts, it will be seen that as against the July quota of 7390 tons, we have received by today, 28th July, only 2000 tons. We have been managing with this 2000 tons and our slender local stock.

Had this happened in any other month the strain on us would not have been so heavy. In the month of July, corresponding as it does to the lean months of Mithunam and Karkadagam, the strain has been very great. It is year end for us. There is no harvest anywhere in Cochin now. The 'Varthuvitha' crop in Chittur is just beginning to be harvested. The off-take is very high because almost everyone in the country except the more well-to-do agriculturists purchase their ration this month. The Food Department was hard put to it to meet the situation created by the non-arrival of this 5390 tons of rice. At this stage let me inform the House as to what 5390 tons of rice means in terms of paras, the measure commonly known to us. One ton of rice is equal to 14 bags of 8 paras each. Our food budget for the month of July was therefore upset by non-receipt of 75460 bags of rice *i.e.*, more than 6 lakhs of paras of rice or 12 lakhs of paras of paddy.

The Department was therefore faced with the very difficult task of continuing the rationing system without breakdown even when the food budget for the month of July was so seriously upset. Let me explain to the House now what steps were taken by Government to meet the situation. With effect from the 17th July, Government cut down the ration from 12 oz. to 10 oz. per adult. Although this was done at the instance of the Government of India, and although thereby we maintained a ration level higher than in many other places, it was with very great reluctance that we did this. When it was known that stocks did not arrive on the 22nd July and may take some more time to come, on the 25th July, Government were constrained still further to reduce the ration to 8 oz. per adult per day. Thereby our ration level was reduced to a par with that in the Province of Madras.

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All along it was hoped that the steamer Jaladuta will arrive on the 26th *i. e.* on Saturday. It was, however, made known to us that it may reach Cochin only on 1st August. Representations being made to the Food Department at New Delhi, a steamer 'Jalayamuna' carrying rice to Bombay has been diverted to Cochin. Information has reached us that it will reach on Wednesday, the 30th July, and will discharge 4000 tons of rice.

To enable us to carry on till the arrival of this steamer, several other steps have been taken by the Government. The Collector of Malabar was approached to give us a loan and he has given us a loan of 2000 bags of rice. This act of kindness, let me gratefully acknowledge on this occasion. The "Varthuvitha" crop has begun to be harvested in the Chittur Taluk. An Officer has been stationed there to purchase this paddy as and when it is ready and transport the purchased stock in lorries to various stations. The Devaswam Department has been requested to give us stocks maintained by them for Devaswam expenditure and it has been arranged to deliver stocks intended for expenditure after 1st Chingam *i. e.* to say, sufficient stock to carry on till 1st Chingam alone will be retained and the balance surrendered. The Grain Purchase Tahsildars of the various Taluks have been directed to approach all landholders in their respective Taluks and either purchase or take on a replacement basis all existing stock with them leaving such quantity alone as would be necessary for them to carry on for the next few days. This work is proceeding vigorously.

Even with all these steps taken it has been found that till the next steamer arrives, it may not be possible safely to keep the 8 oz. ration. With the utmost reluctance, therefore, the ration has been reduced as a very temporary measure to 6 oz. per adult.

This statement is being made to this House just to explain the situation. I can assure the House that there is no room for any alarm and that the cut in the ration will be restored to the previous level immediately. This is a time when Government expect the greatest amount of co-operation and help from this House and from every section of the public. I am sure that such help and co-operation will be forthcoming in ample measure and that this temporary difficulty will soon disappear and that we shall be able to give a better ration to our people in the course of two or three days. I shall make further statements if necessary during the course of this sitting and any further information and clarification which any member wants I shall willingly give from time to time.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan (*Vadakkancheri*) : I should like to know, Sir, whether we have got any available stock of tapioca for purchase by Government or bananas or any other edibles.

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* With respect to tapioca, I may inform the Hon'ble Member and the House that the ban against the export of tapioca is being maintained so that the produce in the State may be availabe for consumption in the State itself.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan (*Vadakkancheri*) : Will Government be pleased to state whether any steps have been taken to commandeer the produce? Now it is being sold at Rs. 3 for 1,500 rupees weight.

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* No steps have been taken, and I shall certainly look into the question and see whether it will be feasible and it will give relief.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan (*Vadakkancheri*): Bananas, though plenty, are selling at very high prices. Can the Government commandeer at market-prices, if the owner will suffer a loss, and sell it at a lower rate.

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* I am very thankful to the Hon'ble Member for these suggestions; but the very immensity of the figures referred to in the statement which I just now read, will convince the Hon'ble Member and the House how small a speck it will be in the ocean of our necessity.

മിസ്റ്റർ എം. കെ. തോമക്കുട്ടി: നേന്ത്രക്കായ കുങ്കിക്കാക്കും കൊള്ളിക്കിഴങ്ങു കുങ്കിക്കാക്കും ഗവൺമെണ്ടിൽനിന്നു ചെയ്യുവാനിരുന്ന ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ വല്ലതും ഇപ്പോൾ ചെയ്യുവാനുണ്ടോ?

Mr. P. Goivnda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education):* With due deference to the Hon'ble Member, I must submit that the question does not arise.

Mr. President: Has the Hon'ble Member any particular point to elucidate, not on general policy, but about any detail.

Mr. P. Govinda Menon *(Minister for Food and Education)*: I can inform the Hon'ble Member, as I made it clear in my statement, that it is not due to our procurement being less.

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[Mr. P. Govinda Menon]
In fact, the local procurement has been more than in any previous year. It is on account of the most unfortunate accident of the non-arrival of the steamer.

മിസ്റ്റർ എം. ഒ. തോമക്കുട്ടി. സ്റ്റീമർ വല്ലപ്പോഴും വരാതിരുന്നാൽ സ്റ്റീമർ വരുന്നതു വരെ ക്ഷാമം കൂടാതെ കഴിക്കുവാനായിട്ടുള്ള ഭക്ഷണസാധനങ്ങൾ എപ്പോഴും കരുതിവെച്ചിരിക്കേണ്ടതല്ലെ?

Mr. President : There is no discussion on this matter in this House. Any point made in the statement will be elucidated. We are not raising a discussion.

Mr. K. Balakrishna Menon (*Cheruthuruthi*)*:* I have already tabled an adjournment motion to discuss the very question. I would suggest that it would be better to reserve all discussions to that occasion.

Mr. President : That is what I said. There is no discussion now. Certain adjournment motions have been received just 3 or 4 minutes before 11-30 today. The usual practice has been that the adjournment motions reach the Secretary or the President half-an hour at least before the meeting.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan (*Vadakkancheri*)*:* No.

Mr. President: Will the Hon'ble Member have patience to hear me? Therefore, I had no time to look into the question of admissibility with three or four minutes before me. Therefore, whether they are admissible or not, decision on that will be given by me tomorrow.

6. Presentation of Budget

Mr. K. Govinda Menon *(Comptroller of Finance and Accounts):* Sir, with your kind permission, I rise to present the budget estimate for 1123. In doing so, I would at the very outset, crave the indulgence of the House due to one who has, for the first time in his career, the honour and the privilege of presenting the budget.

Thanks to the far-sightedness of our gracious Maharaja we have the Cabinet form of Government in our State and the budget has had the unique distinction, for the first time in the annals of the State, of bearing the *imprimatur* of this body after full discussions. The responsibility in the scrutiny of the budget has also been further shared by the members of the Standing Finance Committee elected by the Legislature. My work has, in these circumstances, been considerably lightened by the scrutiny by two bodies representing the Legislature and these are important factors which would, no doubt, ensure an easy passage for the budget. As it is quite unnecessary for me to repeat in full the details contained in my Memorandum, I propose to refer only to the more important features that merit attention.

Actuals—1121.—Time-honoured custom requires me to refer in brief detail to the actuals of the past yeer before I enter into the current year. According to the budget estimate the year was expected to close with a net surplus of Rs. 6·77 lakhs; the actuals, however, gave us a surplus of Rs. 42·27 lakhs owing te unexpected increase in revenue under Salt, Income-tax, Railway, etc., and savings in expenditure mainly under Forest, Education and Public Works. The contribution to the Government of India under Central Excise duties like Betel-nut, etc., did not also come up for payment. Of the surplus, a sum of Rs. 25 lakhs was transferred to the Revenue Reserve Fund and Rs. 5 lakhs to the Industrial Development Fund.

Revised estimate 1122.—When framing the budget estimate for the current year, we counted on a total realisation of revenue of Rs. 357·07 lakhs and programmed for an expenditure of Rs. 354·38 lakhs leaving a surplus of Rs. 2·69 lakhs. On the basis of the actuals so far collected and other relevant information available we hope to realise Rs. 374·69 lakhs—an improvement of Rs. 17·62 lakhs and expect to spend Rs. 372·95 lakhs thus closing with a smaller surplus than originally anticipated. Even though the anticipations of revenue from Sales-tax proved to be disappointing owing to the large number of exemptions, the loss has been more than made up by collection of arrears of Excess Profits Tax and the larger revenue fetched from Stamps, Forests and Tramway and the Vehicles taxation.

The year witnessed striking changes. First and foremost is the introduction of the Cabinet system of Government, with most of the departments of the State transferred to the control of the four popular Ministers and the creation of the convention of joint discussions and decisions by the Cabinet.

The adoption of the system of adult franchise and the organisation of an Election department to cope with the increased work resulting therefrom and to conduct Municipal and Panchayat Elections more efficiently, the creation of a new department of Libraries for better organisation of rural libraries, so necessary for the approach to our goal of universal education, the complete overhaul of the Public Works department to make it as efficient as possible, so that

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